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HENRY WARD BEECHER.

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FACT AND FANCY.

"While we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen: for the things which are seen are temporal; but the things which are not seen are eternal."—II. Cor. iv., 18.

The relations of the ideal and the practical, of the visible and the invisible, of the real and the imaginative, are of transcendent importance. It has been said that everybody in the world is either a Platonist or an Aristotelian—Plato standing for ideal philosophy, and Aristotle for the real and practical. Everybody tends, it is said, to follow one or the other. No: the perfect man unites them both, and is at once Aristotelian and Platonist. His feet standing on solid facts, his head goes philosophizing, and his heart is the balance between them; so that it is wiser to say that he who begins as a Platonist should end also as an Aristotelian, and that he who begins as an Aristotelian should end also as a Platonist; for the two together bring a man where, if he will, he can see One that is greater than either Plato or Aristotle—Jesus Christ, the perfect embodiment, in this world, of the intellectual, the emotive, and the practical elements of life, that are so often dissevered and represented partially. Some men being full of emotion, some being full of thought, some being full of morality, the true man is made up from them all in harmonious relations.

The tendency which God has implanted in the soul is from the visible toward the invisible. Consider what generalizations are in science. We collect facts; we observe their likenesses and dissimilarities; we deduce from a sufficient number of collected and observed facts certain truths; and they

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are truths which have no visibleness. They are to be found, not in physical reality, but in the imagination or mind of man. They are invisible, and yet they are irresistible.

You cannot develop a savage tribe without perceiving that the normal law of development is in the direction of abstract truths instead of isolated and disconnected facts.

When ideality, or the imaginative, is added to the physical, then men are understood to have ideals; and if they be poetical, and have the sense of beauty, then refinement and the esthetic elements come in; and if you forsake the first physical observations, every step, intellectual, imaginative or emotive, is a step away from the visible and material towards the invisible, but not less real—for a thought is as real as the thing that makes the thought; and the relation between two thoughts is just as much a fact as if they were two outward shapes with different colors and different properties.

The relation of this truth to those experiences which have to do with the operations of life is a matter of great importance. All large wisdom consists in the application of the higher invisible qualities which we have deduced; in bringing back again these invisible qualities and re-incarnating them in facts. He is not a painter who simply copies a tree just as it is. A photograph of a tree is not a work of art. He who, observing trees, brings to bear upon them the imagination, the fancy, the reason, the emotions, the law of association, so that from the sight of them there arises in his mind an ideal conception, and who then brings back again to the canvas these idealized trees, even if he takes the visible ones for his model, adds to them those subtler graces which come from him, and do not hang upon them—he who does this is an artist. First he takes things seen, and of these he frames, in the higher realm of thought, ideal conceptions. These ideal conceptions vanish, evaporate, if they remain ideal. If he would make them valuable he reduces them to a visible form, but with features which did not belong to them until they had been through his mind. So the human mind may be said to be a womb, as it were, out of which lower forms are born, first into ideas, and then into

things. There is a perpetual reciprocal interchange by which facts become principles, and by which, then, these principles become facts again, as rules and measures and guides for practical life.

You may say that the same thing is going on between the human mind and the visible world that is going on between the ocean and the sky. All the water is subject to evaporation; it rises in a continuous vapor; and when in the sun it has disported itself long enough, down it comes again in the form of drops, and flows through rills and rivulets and rivers back to the sea. The life of the sea and of the land are dependent on this continual change of the visible water into invisible vapor, and of the invisible vapor into visible water again.

There is a like circulation in the functions of the soul. There is the reality of the outward life lifted up by soul-power into the form of an invisible life, and there is the bringing back again of this invisible life as a means of carrying on the process of growth and culture among men. This forming of loftier conceptions, and applying them to practical concerns, is the continuous law of Christian civilization, and of all civilization. It is a process which, the more you examine it, the more you will find it to be true.

It is out of this double action which is going on, or which ought to go on in all men, that I propose to develop certain knowledges in reference to practical life.

There is light thrown, in the first place, upon those who are theorists in religious life; upon doctrinaires; upon those who live to follow out and to deduce great truths. It is certainly right for men to reason and to carry their reason as far as they can; but he who dwells only in the higher and subtler elements, he who deals with ideals, seldom going back to facts, becomes impractical and unfruitful; he is a partialist, and a partialist remote from life; and he is neither very useful to himself nor a very safe guide to others. Theories and principles are to be tried by their relations to practical life. I have sometimes said that life was a test of truth; that that which men believe on philosophical principles, being carried into outward life, will very soon show

whether it is harmonious or at discord with it. Life is, in an important sense, the test of truth.

We see, secondly, what is the true sphere and the true character of the reverist. There are many who suppose themselves to be dwelling in religious meditation when they are only dwelling in a religious revery. Revery is the exhalation, I might say, of sentiment. It is the emotional nature of man touched by the imagination, rising out of facts, and standing above them,—having no other connection with them, than in looking at them as pictures. A reverist is one who, having forsaken practical life, is dwelling in ether, from which he never returns in any practical or beneficent form. How easy is the heroism which goes on in revery, when we have lost all sight of real life and facts, and perform great deeds in imagination! How easy it is for us to sit with closed eyes, on a balmy day, in some shady nook, during summer, and enact the part of a hero! How easy it is for us to go out as a victorious general! Marching no longer wearies us. With what ease we abstain from food! How brave we are in the endurance of all the hardships of the camp,—the aërial camp,—the camp of the hearth! How, when the shock of battle comes on, are we very knights—a *Cœur de Lion*, every one of us! How we are wounded! How we are nursed, lying in our tent! And what wondrous gratitude springs from our sense of obligation! Meanwhile, all round about us are those who are going on with the realities of life which we do not share. We do not take hold and help in the duties of the household. We reserve for ourselves the best places. We are so refined that nothing must come to us that is rough. We become self-conscious and exacting. Thus, while the reverist is dwelling in visions of heroic life, he is, in fact, a self-seeker—a selfish person.

Now, if revery acts in us to quicken the dull sense which over-addiction to matter produces; if revery operates upon us as silvery vapor under the rays of the sun operates on the face of nature, forming beauteous shapes, and making the landscape more attractive, then it is beneficial; but there are thousands and thousands of persons who think they are something when they are nothing. They think they are some-

thing because they dwell in such reveries ; but their practical life is barren and poor and selfish and mean.

Then, thirdly, there are the meditatists. I have been taught a good deal that meditation is a Christian excellence —and so it is ; but meditation is largely a running of the mind-mill ; and certainly it does not do any good to run the mill when there is no grist in it; and yet, thousands meditate when they have nothing to meditate on. Indeed, the great majority of men are unable to supply themselves with food for continuous reflection. When they meditate, or suppose they do, there is nothing that is really profitable in the operation. There is not one man in a thousand among intelligent men, who is able to take up a train of thought and carry it on connectedly and consecutively. Reading is good because it brings something to you ; memory may also help you ; and there may be times when under strong excitement the mind is lifted up into positions where it can carry on noble trains of thought—and far be it from me to undervalue them ; but where it is thought that every person must meditate every day, how piteous is the exemplification of meditation !

I meditated when I was young, with a healthy body, with an exquisite sensibility to fact, and with undisclosed and undeveloped intellectual powers. I meditated—or thought I did ; and when I woke up I was watching the creeping of a fly on the wall. I meditated—or tried to—about heaven, and about the wondrous truths which belonged to the heavenly state ; and when I came to myself I was watching the birds out of the window. I meditated ; but meditation with me consisted in constantly checking myself and bringing myself back to the thing in hand ; for as the thing in hand was nothing, it was hard to stay to it.

Many think that religious life requires meditation; but I say that religious life first requires knowledge and consideration ; and the question is, whether a man can sit down by himself and consider truths which are disconnected from the practical flow of his daily duties. My impression is that he cannot. One cannot carry on a process of meditation except in connection with things that are occurring in the world and under his hand.

We may now perceive, fourthly, the position of men who are *moralists* according to the common use of that term. There are many persons who are so disgusted with the visionary forms of life that they rebound to the other extreme. They say that metaphysics are unprofitable, that they are dry, that they mislead, that the imagination is a false guide, that the only real man is the man who sticks to reality, and that our business is to live about as well as we can, and then trust God for the rest. That is certainly a truth. Everybody has to live as well as he can, and has to trust God for the rest; but that is not the question: the question is, whether a man who stands on the ground which is usually called morality has aspiration; whether he is endeavoring to develop himself; and whether his conception of what his life and character ought to be is such that the invisible is perpetually tending to his elevation, and to the development of the visible in him. Morality usually consists in a sort of loose compliance with the civil law of the land—and that is right; in a sort of mild obedience to neighborhood customs and rules—and that is right; in a sort of general avoidance of the grosser forms of indulgence which public sentiment condemns—and that is right; in an observance of those courtesies on which the ease of intercourse in society so much depends—and that is right. As for the rest, it is said that a man should be a good father, a good husband, a good neighbor, a good citizen, and a good business man. It is claimed that that is about all you can expect of a man.

But those who are usually called moralists, and who continually play round about their duty as fathers and husbands and neighbors and citizens, are so slavishly addicted to fact that they have very little ideality; and having no picture spread out before them, having no constantly recurring conception that condemns them and rebukes them all the time, that leads them to higher endeavor, and that all the while shows them that they have not reached that after which they aspire, they become dim, dull, lethargic, stationary, stagnant.

Fifthly, we may from this view of the double-action of man, from the ideal to the real, and from the real to the ideal,

give a practical solution to many questions that are asked, and that ought to be asked, of parents by their children. There is the question, for instance, as to the profitableness, or the injuriousness of reading—especially the reading of fiction. If all fictions—all theological fictions, all legal fictions, all business fictions, and all literary fictions—were taken away, there would be very little left which we call common life, and which is familiar to us. Nobody who has not made it a matter of investigation has any idea of how largely the imagination is made to be the alphabet out of which the real is spelled. No parent has brought up a child who has not been obliged to betake himself or herself from the real to the imaginary. The moment a child is old enough to have glimpses of things that rise above the mere physical realm, he asks questions which are puzzling; and the parent in answering them almost always finds it necessary to tell the child some little story, some little fable, some little fiction, and generally winds up by saying, "That is as near as I can tell you now, my child; but when you grow up and are as big as mamma, you will understand it as well as she does." Oftentimes fiction is nearer the truth than truth itself is. For instance, if you undertake to explain to a child the distinction between the judicial, the executive and the legislative powers of the nation, I think you will find yourself, even if you understand the idea perfectly, unable to bring it, in its complete, unmodified form, into the mind of the child. In other words, how are you going to put a truth that is large enough to fill your mind into a child's mind? Can you get a full quart measure into the space of a gill? No. What do you do? You go down to the child's plane of life, and imagine about what he can understand, and reduce that to the form of some little fairy story, or fable, or fiction, in which, perhaps, the ant, the bird, or the beast plays a part. You take things which are familiar to the child, and with them represent, as well as you can, the truth which you wish to impart; and the child smiles, and thinks he has an idea—and so he has; but it is not the whole of that which you have in your mind. What you have told him is not true. If you were to tell him the truth, it would be nothing at all to him. That

is to say, if you were to state to him the actual facts, he would interpret them according to the undeveloped state of his mind, and would not understand them.

The picture goes into the *camera obscura* bottom side up, and you are obliged, by a second set of mirrors, to bring it back to its right position. And when you make your block for printing a picture, you make it so that that part which belongs on the right side is on the left, and that which belongs on the left is on the right. You have to make your block backwards in order to have your picture forwards. The block must be false to the eye if you would have the picture, when it is printed, true to the eye.

This process of fiction has marked the development of civilization all the way up. Men have come to higher qualities by an imperfect rendering of things. When things have been interpreted in a lower language, such as men could understand, they have been imperfect and fictitious in a great measure.

If, then, one asks, "Is the use of fiction improper"? I say, It is scarcely a question whether you will use it or not. It is indispensable, yea, inevitable, that you should use it. You cannot help using it. If it is not right to use it, then our Master was a sinner above all men; for when literature is dead, and men are forgotten, those magnificent parables, those grand fictions of his, such as the story of the Prodigal Son, will stand in everlasting remembrance. Nowhere more than in the Scriptures is fiction used for purposes of instruction.

Is it true, then, since fiction is wholesome and desirable, that the more you have of it the better? A great many persons reason in that way. Ha! because it is useful for you to take (asking the pardon of one school) twenty drops of paregoric, would it be beneficial for you to take a gallon? Because ten slices of bread are enough for a growing schoolboy, would twenty loaves be better? Is there no measure or rule in these things? Because there is a proper use of fiction, is every use of it beneficial?

According to the principles which we have developed this morning, just so far forth as fiction enables one to rise above the vulgarity, the commonness and the sordidness of the real

without separating himself from practical life, it is beneficial; but he who so reads fiction that he forgets to come back again to practical life, reads it to his harm—to his damage.

Begin, if you will, upon the earth; but you must rise; and having risen, you must come back again to earth from whence you ascended, bringing something more than you found when you took your flight. A reading of fiction which throws off care, or a reading of fiction which brings knowledge to men's minds, as does much of the fiction that is written nowadays (for many of the fictions of to-day are histories, biographies, moral philosophies, scientific treatises, not a few writers of fiction having taken imaginary voyages in the air, beneath the surface of the terraqueous globe, and through the water, for the sake of setting before men truths of science which have been found out)—such a reading of fiction is beneficial. He who reads fiction to rest himself, to refresh himself, to lift himself above the dead level of the vulgar real, reads it to his advantage and profit; but he who reads it to abide in it, never giving back a better man to his every-day household or business duties, is hurt by it. It has decomposed the texture of his mind. He is not so good a man as he was before. And a man to be benefited by the reading of fiction not only must be lifted up by it above the affairs of earth, but must come back to those affairs again with renewed strength. It is said that Antæus renewed his strength when he touched the ground; but we renew our strength when we rise into the air. We derive our strength from the invisible rather than from the visible.

It is not, as a general thing, a very safe or wholesome process to excite strong feelings or emotions which have no proper outlet. There is a great deal of unwholesome effect produced by going to meetings. For instance, where a man goes to exciting religious meetings for several nights of the week, where he habitually attends religious services on Sunday by which he is lifted up to a great height in his emotive and ideal nature, if he never comes back again to the ordinary affairs of life with increased fidelity, his condition is not improved; it is made worse; for to go to church and have strong feelings excited, and not have those feelings applied

to daily life and duty, is positively injurious. There is such a thing as *spiritual* intemperance, as well as *spirituous* intemperance.

If, on the other hand, a man returns from the kindling in him of a high ideal state to be more faithful as a friend, to be more heroic in disinterested actions, to be more patient in troubles, and to be strong where he is tempted to be weak, then this stimulation is beneficial to him. Wherever by preaching, or any other means, one is brought into a very high state of feeling—a state of feeling higher than he can work off in practical ways—it is injurious to him.

That is why you shall see men of very eminent religious experience, but of very faulty ethical life. People say of them, "They are insincere persons—they are hypocrites." There are insincere persons, there are hypocrites, among such men; but a great many of them are a great deal more inconsistent than hypocritical. Of inconsistent people not one in a thousand is necessarily a hypocrite.

Many persons think that emotion is religion; but it is not. A person may be greatly hindered by emotion. One may have such rapturous views of God, of heaven, and of that rest which remaineth for the people of God, as to be unfitted for either heaven or earth.

Which is the better mother, she that is intensely emotive, or she that is very practical? The one never caresses her children; she never seizes her darling and kisses him "all to pieces"; she never talks sentiment; she is quiet; she wears a placid face; her eye is like an open book full of pictures; her presence is peace; her heart carries warmth wherever she goes; there is nothing which the child does which she is not cognizant of; she is incessantly inspiring and lifting him up; and she is all the while molding his character by invisible touches. He cannot remember that she ever went into a paroxysm of affection toward him; and yet there is not a thought or feeling in his memory that is not twined with his recollection of her. She was the *doing* mother. She was the mother whose feeling worked itself out in perpetual fidelity, and tenderness, and sweetness, and lovableness. Her life consisted in turning the power of a great angelic heart into

that which was physical, in order to make that physical spring up with divine colors and blossoms like those of the eternal sphere.

Another mother, right across the street, is all vitality and vivacity and imagination; and her children are her "darlings"; they are "precious little angels," and she is running after one and another of them all the time, throwing out her arms, and saying, "Come to my bosom"; and yet their clothes are neglected, and so is their training. She loves them too much to work for them. Her love for them pours over; but they grow up wild and ignorant.

Now, which is the better mother, the one that has a great deal of feeling, but comparatively little practice, or the one that has comparatively little apparent feeling, but a great deal of practice?

Many and many a river works. The Merrimac runs with a small channel. It is called a prodigious river; but I could almost ford it. Where are its waters? For a hundred miles they are busy turning vast wheels. They have turned out to the right and to the left, and gone to work; and that is better than for them to be in the middle of a deep channel, and not work. So there are great hearts that turn the currents of emotion into actual practical deeds. It is safe and wholesome to have intense feelings, high excitements, if they take on practical forms; but it is neither safe nor wholesome to have such feelings and excitements if they do not take on such forms.

Why is it that the skillful surgeon can stand by the side of a suffering patient, and take the dissecting knife, and cut down to the nerve, and along the most delicate veins and arteries, and cause that patient the most exquisite torment, and do it composedly, with his hand as firm as a rock? You say he has overcome his feeling. I say that his humanity, his sensibility, his tenderness, have all gone into his action, and are embodied in what he is doing. His act is a kindness; and it is a kindness greater, frequently, a thousand times, than the forbearance of it would be. To do a thing that is beneficial for the sake of another is often a million times better than to do a thing that is pleasant for the

sake of that other. It indicates more love and more kindness.

Now, to be heroes in novels, and never anywhere else, is demoralizing. To be full of overflowing sympathy in fiction that has no inspiration is demoralizing. And if any young people want to know my opinion about novels and stories, my opinion is this: use fiction as you would spices in your diet. No man takes a quart of cloves, nor exhausts the cruet, at a single meal. These things may be used with moderation to season one's food with, but they are not to be used alone; and so fictions, while they are not to be resorted to exclusively, may be used with discretion to season life with. If you find that using them brings you back to duty with more alacrity, with more cheer, and with more aptitude; if you find that it makes you better in your relations to your fellow-men, then it does not hurt you, and you are at liberty to use them; but if you find that using them makes you morose; if you find that it gives you a distaste for work; if you find that it inclines you to run into a hole that you may get away from your fellow-men; if you find that it makes you unkind, disobliging and selfish, then you may be sure that, whether it injures anybody else or not, it injures you.

This law which I have unfolded, that we must first go from the real to the ideal, and then come back and incarnate the ideal into the real form—this law will throw some light, sixthly, on the reason why beauty is almost invariably beneficial as it is developed in nature, and why art, which is the science of beauty, has been on the whole, perhaps, an injury to the world. Architecture stands apart, and may be left out; but I think it will be difficult to show that painting and sculpture, and all else that goes under the term "fine arts," have been a benefit to the world. In the early periods of the world art was elevating to a large extent; but as soon as it began to be a thing of beauty for the sake of beauty it began to deteriorate. Pre-Raphaelite art was sincere. It was profoundly ignorant of the human form, of combination and of perspective; but there was that intensity of reality about it which always makes things comely and attractive to refined natures. As soon as you come down to the time

of Raphael, you perceive that he began to make art an instrument of human pleasure. His Madonnas were no longer so intensely filled with a sense of God being themselves homely, long lank, lean, not knowing nor caring how they looked. Raphael's Madonnas got out of all that: they were plump; they were handsome; and they knew it; and Raphael knew it: he meant that they should be; and he meant that nobody looking on these holy pictures should fail to admire them.

Now, why has art been deteriorating and demoralizing since it began to be an instrument of pleasure in the world? Because to take real things from life and present them to the senses of men, and not to their higher imagination, is always deteriorating. If, for instance, the element of beauty works in you a conception of purity and nobleness, then it helps; but if it is presented so that it draws you toward the sensuous part of your nature, and not toward the spiritual part, then it hurts. It is safer to go where that art is from which our lower nature revolts, than to go where that art is which is pleasing to our lower nature. It is dangerous to go where art has been employed to make things which are sensuous sweeter and pleasanter. We need nothing to help the senses. We need nothing to cultivate the passions. The strength of life lies in its grosser elements; and if the finer elements are brought in to work downward toward the passions and appetites, the effect is damaging. No matter how faultless art is in symmetry, no matter how magnificent it is in expression, no matter how exquisite it is in coloring, and no matter how charming it is in grouping, if its effect is not to lift a man higher, but to make him content with his lower nature, then it corrupts—and that is what art does largely at the present time.

Now, the beauty of nature does not deteriorate men, because it brings them under the operation of the great law by which the visible works purely on the invisible, and the invisible on the visible again. This perpetual interchange from matter to mind and from mind to matter keeps it in health and vigor and power.

We may also, I remark, seventhly, from the principles

which have been stated, throw some light on the subject of the emotive element in religion. Unquestionably the pure emotions of hope and love and joy produce happiness; but where the law of feeling is introduced as a test of religion, men render themselves liable to great mistakes, and most fatal ones. The true test in religion is not how impressionable one is. I put an Æolian harp in my window. The evening breeze, having nothing to do, and finding the harp in the window, courts it, and an interchange of sweet sounds goes on. I take a crowbar and put that in the window. The same wind sweeps over it, but it does not sing. Why did the harp sing? For no reason except that its nature was impressionable. It put forth no volition. There was no merit in what it did. Why did not the crowbar sing? Because it was made a crowbar.

Here is a man with an abdominal temperament. He is cold, sluggish, stupid. Under the most stimulating influences he barely wakes up. He goes to church. The sermon is a most stirring one, but it does not affect him. Right over against him are people whose parents were intensely excitable. Their parents, too, were intensely excitable. There was a double and treble charge of nervous tendency given to these children; and they are so sensitive that if you look at them they change color, and if you breathe on them they quiver all over. They have no difficulty in keeping awake, and they are deeply affected by the sermon.

Some men are made like crowbars, and some like Æolian harps; but if a man is like an Æolian harp, it is no credit to him that he sounds quickly; and if a man is like a crowbar it is not his fault that he does not sound readily. The point of judgment is to lie in this: A man's temperament being given to him, what has he done with it? Has he used it to augment the sum of his own being, and to benefit the world around about him? These are test questions.

There are men who are prodigiously joyful in religion, but to whom no more merit is due than to the trumpet that sounds loudly when a strong man blows it.

There are other persons who have slow, methodical, unexcitable natures; and, looking at these excitable people, they

say, "If I were really a good Christian man, there is what I should be; but I cannot get up to where they are. I wish I could. God be merciful to me a sinner."

Now, these unemotive men are as true to their nature as are those emotive men, and very likely they are better; for although the emotive men are sensitive to feeling, the unemotive men never use their feeling as a cascade to fill the air full of flying drops and vapor: they use it rather as a mill-stream with which to turn the wheel of purpose and activity.

I mention, eighthly, the relation of our daily duty in our several callings to piety. There are those who believe that it is impossible for them to be Christians because they are so busy; but that is the reason of all others why a man can be a Christian. There are those who think that when they have got through the pressure of life they will be Christians; but they will then be in the condition which is most unfavorable to piety; for men need the higher forms of experience to animate the practical daily duties of life.

When you think of saints, you think of pale persons who are very still, who stand apart and commune with God, and wish they were not alive. Now, when I think of a saint, I do not think of any such thing. I believe there are just such saints; I believe there are saints in every relation of life; but I tell you, that brown maiden woman in New England, who in the morning rolls her sleeves up above her red elbows, and, because her sister, who is the mother of children, is feeble, is not going to let her do the work, and occupies herself about the house, and takes the burden upon herself, bearing with the children that she did not bear, and gives her life all day with intense industry to lighten that sister's toil, and has done it for five years past, and will do it for twenty years to come—she is my saint. A busy, bustling saint she is, to be sure, but she is a saint. Her emotions do not go off in chance ethereal experiences. Her great soul rises into the conception of God, of the other life, of love, and of spiritual things; and instead of dwelling in them, she turns them back upon her life as fruitful showers which produce worthy deeds; and people say of her, "She is good as goodness. What a homely old good creature she

is!" I think it more complimentary to be regarded as a person whose life, in a disinterested way, has embodied or incarnated itself in works of goodness, than to have the Pope put your name in the calendar.

Do you think that that is religion which goes on in the closet, but not that which goes on in the store? I will admit that a great deal goes on in the store which is not religion; but I will admit, too, that there is a great deal that goes on in the closet which is not religion. The closet for the store, and the store for the closet.

A man is profoundly immersed in mathematical studies—and that is right; he is working out most important problems—and that is right; but when they are all wrought out, there is a big bridge to be built; vast piers are to go up; the span is to be carried across. The stability of the structure is to be tested; the strength of the materials is to be measured; the strain is to be known; and when the man has worked out all these elements he goes into the field and applies them. Then the bridge rises slowly, and it becomes more and more comely as it goes up; and by-and-by it stands in the air, at a distance, apparently as filmy as though a cobweb had been thrown over the chasm; and yet it is so strong that the wind, the storm, and the tramp of a thousand feet cannot break it. And is he any more a mathematician when he is studying upon these problems than when he is applying them, and working out the result which is to grow from them? Is not the glory of his study shown at the point of application?

Your true religious life consists in standing where God has put you, and exercising Christian qualities. It consists in showing pity where pity is called for; in manifesting patience where patience is required; in exhibiting gentleness where gentleness is needed. It consists in forbearing with others; in bearing others' burdens; in not being easily provoked; in thinking no evil, when evil things are brought to you; in loving, where other men would hate; in doing, where others would sit still. In other words, as it is indispensable that the mathematician should make an application of his problem, so it is necessary that the theory of religion should be applied to life.

The best part of one's life is the performance of his daily duties. All higher motives, ideals, conceptions, sentiments, in a man are of no account if they do not come down and strengthen him for the better discharge of the duties which devolve upon him in the ordinary affairs of life.

Once more, and lastly. The power of rising to Christian experiences and duties is not a power given to those alone who have gone through a mystical change. I think, perhaps, this is the head for which I mainly planned out the whole sermon. I see a great many persons of whom I say, "I wonder that they are not avowedly religious persons." When I talk with them, and urge upon them the higher Christian life, I find that they have a vague conception of ecclesiastical ceremony, or flummery, or both—of the vast, operose, intricate beliefs which are prescribed by the Church. And they say, "Oh, it is appalling to think what a man has to assume if he becomes a Christian! I do not understand all the doctrines which I should be expected to subscribe to; I cannot understand them; it is useless for me to try; so I must do my best, and take my chance. That is about all I can do."

There is another class of persons who think they do believe all these doctrines—though, thank God, they do not. There is a great deal associated with religion that a man would be the worse for believing. It is with religion as John Milton said it was with the old Fathers: "A net thrown into a river, that brings with it stones, and shells, and sticks, and leaves, and all manner of rubbish—that," said he, "are the Fathers of the Church." Historical religion, religion as it is oftentimes represented by religious teachers, is a net with here and there a fish in it, but mostly filled with sticks, and leaves, and ever so many other things. Much of that is rubbish. It has no vitality; or its mission is ended, so that it is to true religion what last year's straw is to this year's grain. And where a man says, "I cannot become a Christian because I cannot adopt all the ideas of the Church," I say to him, "You do not need to."

Other men say, "It would be insincerity in me to pretend that I was a Christian. I have never had any such conversion as Christians tell of having experienced. I have

sought this great blessing, but it has not come to me." I want to say, in all fidelity and tenderness, to every one who is looking upon Christian manhood as depicted in Christ and as taught in the New Testament as something difficult of attainment: You do not need to wait for any systematic belief, or for any special change. Take the duty that stands next to you, and attempt to do it for God's sake, and continue doing it, and the proper discharge of your obligations will of itself develop in you a spiritual state. The tendency of right-doing is to raise the doer into a higher mood.

To take an extraordinary case, if I had the talking with a usurious old miser, I would not say to him, ordinarily, "Change your whole nature instantly." If he could be caught in a great congregation, and subjected to the electrical influence of the multitude at a revival, he might be changed in an hour, perhaps; but probably not under other circumstances. I know of a case which illustrates the way in which I think such a man should be dealt with. I speak of it with profound reverence.

A woman of a great and royal nature married a man who was as small as a man could be and yet be called a man. The strength of his being ran to selfishness. They lived together two scores of years, and he died in the odor of sanctity; for he became the most benevolent man in all the region; and his name was a proverb for generosity and charity. How was he transformed? Not by lectures; not by any ideal attempt to transform himself; but by the sweet example of her to whom he looked up as his queen—though he thought he governed her. Everybody knew that she governed him. She did not know it, and he did not know it, such is the power of a kind and loving heart. She gradually led him to the performance of noble deeds. As a little child that is tempted to take medicine sips first, and, finding that it is not bitter, sips again, and, finding that it is sweet, takes the whole spoonful, so this man was tempted to try works of beneficence. The experience of the first trial felt so good that he tried a little more, and then he tried a little more, and then he tried a little more, till by and by he had the conviction that it was a good way to be happy. At length he

began to understand the principles which governed doing good. He rose into the sphere of the ideal. The conception which he formed there he brought down and wrought out in acts of humanity. Thus he overcame that which was vulgar in his life. He was transformed. He did right things; and the doing right things brought right feelings; and these right feelings led him to do other right things.

If right feelings do not produce right conduct they die out; and if right conduct does not produce right feelings it is because you do not let it. Every good deed that a man does is like the germ of a plant. Give it a chance to grow, and the earth beneath will counsel it to shoot up, and the sun above will counsel it to shoot up; and up it will come. Every right thing done, if it be not hindered, will be fruitful in spiritualizing the mind; and a spiritualized mind will occupy itself in doing right things.

"Do you say, "This is teaching men to undertake to work out their own religion"? Why, yes, I think it is; and this might be fitly joined to the text, "Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling; for it is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of his good pleasure."

I say to my tulips and hyacinths and crocuses, "I will plant you this fall, and you are going to come up, every mother's son of you, in the spring." That is throwing my confidence upon nature—no, not upon nature, but upon nature's God. Do not I know what is going on in heaven? Do not I know that the sun has gone almost as far from us as it will go? Do not I know that he will soon come back with all summer blessings in his hand? Do not I know that the plants will grow as soon as the sun finds them and sheds his warmth upon them?

The Sun of Righteousness has no north and no south; he is continually exerting his influence upon men; and to every man who has capacity, and will apply it to the thing that is next to him, saying, "For Christ's sake I will do the best I can," there will be given that power which will refine the deed, and make it a spiritual experience; and that deed will produce others; and these will rise to make aspiration; and that aspiration will come back to water the field, and cause it

to be more fruitful. And so, step by step, doing Christian acts will give us trust in Christ. Working for him is to manifest trust in him.

"Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me."

The Lord stands behind every duty, and says, "Do it for the love of it, and it will strike through to me. I am behind every sorrow; I am behind every burden; I am behind the whole creation; I am the Deliverer. Creation groans and travails in pain until now; and I know why; and I stand behind every trouble, to relieve it. He who stands among men doing right for right's sake, and for my sake so far as he knows how, does it unto me, and I will reveal myself to him."

If in the doing of right things men rise to a higher conception, there will come a day when Jesus Christ will rise upon them with healing in his beams. There will be times when they will say, "I know how God feels." They will have experiences which will interpret God to them in strains so far above anything that they have ever felt, that they will know that they are children of God, that they are born of God, and that the Parent has blessed the child.

Do not wait for ideal experiences. Begin where you are. Refuse wrong things, and do right things. And do not be content to do right things in a listless, purposeless way, but understand that right deeds produce right feelings, and that these feelings act back on conduct, and that the conduct and the feelings together bring a man, step by step, up to a higher experience.

There are men in this congregation who know what I mean—men that I found afar off—men who were skeptics. I said to them, "Do the thing that is right, and light will come to you." They took my advice; and little by little they have had formed in them the Lord Jesus Christ the hope of glory. You are my witnesses. Bear the testimony to others. It is right that every man should succor those who are in the same strait from which he has been delivered. He that has been brought into the right way should guide those who are out of the way. Go to those who are dark-

minded and skeptical, and say, "The way to be a Christian is to begin to live Christianly. Do that, and follow on, and you shall know the Lord."

PRAYER BEFORE THE SERMON.*

Our Father, we rejoice that thou hast crowned thyself with that name, which is to us the name above every other, of love and kindness. Our thoughts go back to our childhood, and to the tenderness of our parents toward us—to their diligence in our behalf; to their suffering for us; to their love for us, which was greater than their love for themselves. We go back to the household, which was ordered for the good of those who dwelt therein. We thank thee for such fidelity, for such examples, for such prayers as theirs. We thank thee for all the benign influences that shaped our early life. We thank thee that thou hast caused it to be a treasure-house of our memory, so that we still talk and think of it with gratitude as years roll by. We thank thee that we were so blest in the sanctuary of our homes when we were children. We thank thee that thou art still inspiring the hearts of so many to fulfill toward their children the work which God fulfills toward the race. We thank thee that in so many families there is an interpretation of the divine suffering and the divine faithfulness. Not that any of us are able to reflect even the smallest full beam of thy light. Thou art infinitely greater than we are in all the excellencies which make our households seem dear to us. Thy mercies outrun ours past all conception. Thy faithfulness, all that thou art willing to bear and to do, thy patience, thy loving-kindness, and thy tender mercies—these transcend the imagination of man. Where shall we find in imperfect human beings anything that can compare with the grandeur, and perfectness, and purity, and depth, and sweetness of an infinite Being? Thou art loving; and all the heavens do know it. Thou art pouring abroad the divine beneficence throughout all the earth. Thou art filling every generation with light and warmth. Thou art sending forth all the influences of nature. They are thy messengers. Thou art impleting the universe with thy will, and it serves those who are to be heirs of salvation, rearing them up through many trials, through much suffering, through a thousand influences, seen or unseen, recognized or unknown. Thou art preparing them for that higher and better life where thou art disclosed, not as power nor as wisdom, but as love, including power and wisdom. Thou dost fill all the realm with thyself; and therefore it is light, and in it is eternal summer. We beseech of thee that thou wilt interpret to us more and more of thyself; more and more of our own experiences; more from the tasks and duties of life well done.

Bless, we pray thee, this morning, in a special manner these dear children that have by their parents been offered in consecration to

* Immediately following the baptism of children.

God. And bless these parents. Give them grace to fulfill all that to-day they intend and promise. May they watch in all patience over their children. May they bear and forbear with them, being themselves exemplars. May they still instruct by right-living those that thou hast committed to them. And may they reap joy and happiness for all their tears.

May the lives and health of these little ones be precious in thy sight; and if any of them are to go, will the Lord prepare those who are thus to be smitten, that they may be able still to say, It is the Lord: let him do what seemeth to him good.

We pray for all the households in this congregation; for all that are in darkness and trouble; for all that are in midnight. We beseech of thee that thou wilt draw near to console those who are in great distress of mind—for sorrows come often, blinding men, as storms in winter; and they cannot see their way, and grow numb under their touch. Lord, thou dost have compassion upon those who suffer overmuch; and we pray that thou wilt breathe thine own Spirit into them, that they may understand that thou art near to them; and when they cannot discern thee, still may they wait until faith itself shall have resurrection in their hearts.

We pray that thou wilt be near to those who are sick, and to those who are heartsick in view of the things which are to come upon their well-beloved. May the Lord be gracious to them, and reveal himself to them. May he prepare the departing to go, and those that remain to tarry; and may both those that go and those that stay, those that rejoice and those that suffer, be in the Spirit of the Lord, and in the full fruition of faith, discerning things that are yet to come. May they have power given them yet to believe that all things are overruled for good; that all events are in thy hands. And so we pray that they may strengthen themselves, and may be lifted up continually.

We pray that thou wilt be near to all who feel the burden of life; to all who find the cares of this world heavy; to all who are chafed and worried by their daily duties. Give them strength of body, and clearness of understanding, and patience, until the battle shall end, and victory be achieved.

We pray, O Lord our God, that every one of us may behold the life that now is, and all its visible realities, with gratitude, and yet stand upon them as merely a road leading to the other life, which is more real. This life is for the senses: that is for the spirit. This is for the flesh that perishes: that is for the immortal soul which is imperishable. This passes: that abides. And grant, we pray thee, that all thy dealings with us in this mortal state may more and more draw us toward the real and invisible life.

Bless, we pray thee, all who differ from us. Bless all who worship to-day, though they be not of our name, and though they hold the truth fragmentarily. Who are we, that hold it also as in the twilight, that we should arrogate authority over them, or do despite to them? O Lord our God, we pray that thou wilt have compassion upon all who are trying to believe right and to live right. Have compassion upon all those who are crying out to thee, though they may not know

how to pronounce well thy name. May all uncharitableness and unkindness one toward another be put away from them, and may they be bound together in the common sympathy which they have in the Lord Jesus Christ, the Sufferer, who gave his life as a ransom for his enemies.

We pray that thou wilt bless every effort which is made for the diffusion of knowledge. Bless our schools and colleges and seminaries of learning. Bless all the efforts which are made to disseminate instruction among the extremely ignorant. Build up in intelligence all those who have newly come to their liberty. May the love of Christ make them free inwardly.

Lift the light, we beseech of thee, upon all who are lying low and groveling in the dust, that they may become strong, and that by faith in thee they may achieve all those victories which by unaided nature they cannot have. Let the world come, at last, towards its ripeness. More and more may the nations learn to love and obey thee. And finally may it be proclaimed upon earth, and everywhere, that the kingdoms of this world have become the kingdoms of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ; and may he reign from the rising of the sun until the going down of the same.

And to thy name shall be the praise, Father, Son and Spirit. *Amen.*

PRAYER AFTER THE SERMON.

Our Father, we pray for thy blessing to rest upon the word which has been spoken. May none misinterpret it and be misled. May there grow up in every heart a sovereign desire to be at one with God. And if any find the warfare which is going on within them to be greater than they can endure, thou Burden-bearer of the universe, put underneath them thine own strength. Thou Holy Ghost, that canst develop the hidden power of the soul, breathe upon all troubled, struggling, striving spirits. Bring near to us a sense of the shortness of this life. It is but a hand's breadth. It is only a vapor. It passes quickly. It appeareth but for a little time, and then is ended. It is but just begun before it is finished. Therefore teach us that we are to live, not for that which is here, but for that which is to come. Bring us near to the great hereafter—to its rest, and to its peace, and to its joys. As thou hast put us here, O thou God of infinite compassion and love, take every weary soul up into thine arms. Lay thine hand upon us and bless us. And may there be multitudes that shall turn from this benediction to make known to those who are round about them what the Lord hath done for them. And to thy name shall be the praise, Father, Son and Spirit. *Amen.*

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